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# Where *lol* Is: Function and Position of *lol* Used as a Discourse Marker in YouTube Comments

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# Where *lol* Is: Function and Position of *lol* Used as a Discourse Marker in YouTube Comments

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*Lol* is probably one of the most popular words in computer-mediated communication. It is generally taken to be the acronym of “laughing out loud”, but it is not always used to indicate a humorous response; rather, it is multifunctional. Drawing on previous studies of the different functions of *lol*, this paper explores a possible correlation between the position and function of non-lexicalized *lol* in the specific context of YouTube comments. The hypothesis is that the function of *lol* largely depends on its position: clause-initial *lol* is not used with the same functions as clause-final *lol*. The data for the study come from the comment threads of three popular YouTube videos posted in 2017, 2018 and 2019 on the channel Miranda Sings, a channel posting humorous videos, which has a very wide audience and 10 million subscribers. The complete comment threads total 20,287 comments and 886 distinct occurrences of non-lexicalized *lol*. The analysis of the occurrences is both quantitative, aimed at determining the proportions of each use and position, and qualitative. Using the tools of discourse analysis and pragmatics, the study examines the functions of *lol* on two levels: the level of discourse organization and the level of social interaction.

**Keywords:** *lol*, YouTube, discourse marker, syntactic position, computer-mediated discourse, pragmatic marker

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*Lol* est probablement un des mots les plus caractéristiques du discours médié par ordinateur. Il est généralement présenté comme l’acronyme de « laughing out loud », qui signifie rire fort en anglais, mais il n’est pourtant pas toujours utilisé pour indiquer une réaction amusée et ses fonctions sont en réalité multiples. En s’appuyant sur les études précédentes qui se sont penchées sur le fonctionnement de *lol*, cet article explore la corrélation possible entre la position et la fonction des formes non lexicalisées de *lol* dans le contexte particulier des commentaires postés en réaction à des vidéos sur YouTube. Il vérifie l’hypothèse selon laquelle la fonction de *lol* dépend largement de sa position : un *lol* utilisé en début de proposition n’a pas la même fonction qu’un *lol* utilisé en fin de proposition. Le corpus de l’étude est constitué des fils de commentaires de trois vidéos postées en 2017, 2018 et 2019 sur la chaîne YouTube humoristique Miranda Sings, qui compte 10 millions d’abonnés. Ces trois fils de commentaires représentent un total de 20 287 commentaires, où on trouve 886 occurrences d’utilisations non lexicalisées de *lol*. L’analyse de ces occurrences est à la fois quantitative, elle cherche à déterminer la proportion de chaque fonction et position, et qualitative. À l’aide des outils de l’analyse du discours et de la pragmatique, l’étude examine les fonctions de *lol* à deux niveaux distincts : le niveau de l’organisation du discours et celui de l’interaction sociale.

**Mots clés :** *lol*, YouTube, marqueur discursif, discours médié par ordinateur, position syntaxique, marqueur pragmatique

## 1. Introduction

- 1 In a 2013 TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) talk, McWhorter argued that *lol* “does not mean laughing out loud anymore” and has “evolved into something that is much subtler”, such as “a marker of empathy”, “a marker of accommodation” (McWhorter, 2013). While it is indeed true that the meaning of *lol* is quite subtle and variable, this overlooks the fact that online and offline, laughing, be it aloud or not, does not only mean expressing one’s amusement. As many studies focusing on face-to-face interaction have shown, laughing has many other discursive and social functions. For instance, in a study dating back to 1983, O’Donnell-Trujillo and Adams isolated five functions of laughter in conversation: marking turn-taking, instructing a hearer on how an utterance is to be understood, evidencing how an utterance has been understood, inviting elaboration of problematic turns, and accomplishing affiliation. Therefore, laughter in face to face conversation is already multifunctional. As a result, its online counterpart, *lol*, may indeed have evolved, but its use was most probably never restricted to expressing one’s amusement in the first place. Many scholars (for instance Baron, 2004; Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008; Zappavigna, 2012; Markman, 2013; McSweeney, 2018) have already pointed out that *lol* is not always used to indicate a humorous response and have identified several other functions of *lol*. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, no study has investigated the possible link between *lol*’s function and its position in the message. This is precisely the twofold aim of the present study: it explores the functions of *lol* in a specific context (YouTube comments) and it examines the possible correlation between those functions and the position of *lol*. The hypothesis is that the function of *lol* largely depends on its position: clause-initial *lol* is not used with the same functions as clause-final *lol* or stand-alone *lol*.
- 2 While the starting point of the study is structural (place and position of *lol* in the utterance), the study itself focuses more on the interpersonal implications of *lol* use. Therefore, the approach used in this paper is a pragmatic approach, focusing on function and meaning in context and in the communicative situation.

## 2. Data and methodology

- 3 The data for the study come from the comment threads of three popular YouTube videos posted on the channel Miranda Sings. This channel has a very wide audience and 10 million subscribers and, what is even more important when studying *lol*, is specialized in humorous videos. The three videos in question are:
  - “Destroying Toys with as Seen on TV Knives” (posted on the 28th May 2017)
  - “Why I’m in a Wheelchair Now” (posted on the 29th September 2018)
  - “Baby Shark! \*Emotional\*” (posted on the 26th February 2019)

4 The three complete comment threads were saved on the 3rd of March 2019. They total more than 20,000 comments (20,287). Occurrences of *lol* and its typographic variants (with or without capitalization, with one or several “o” or “l”) were then extracted. Occurrences of *lol* used as a lexicalized word, in utterances such as verbal “I lol’d” or nominal “What a lol” or “For the lolz”, were excluded since the study only concerns the original initialism. The final dataset comprises 886 distinct occurrences of non-lexicalized *lol*. The analysis of these occurrences is both quantitative, aimed at determining the proportions of each use and position, and qualitative. The study examines the functions of *lol* in the light of discourse analysis, on the level of discourse organization, but also on the pragmatic level of social interaction.

5 *Lol* has mostly been studied in multi-turn interactions online or in texting. YouTube comments, on the contrary, typically consist of single-turn dyadic interactions: the turn is initiated by the video, and the user’s comment constitutes the reception of it, which completes the turn. As a result, even though they “display the intrinsic features of interaction” (Dyner, 2014: 38), YouTube comments cannot display phenomena pertaining to interactional coordination, which is essentially what other studies have focused on. The present study thus identifies the functions of *lol* in a different context, which complete the ones already identified in previous research.

### 3. Syntactic position of *lol*

#### 3.1. *Lol* as a discourse marker

6 The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) defines *lol* as an exclamation, that is “a short sound, word or phrase spoken suddenly to express an emotion”. In a similar way, *lol* is often described as an interjection, which Quirk et al.’s grammar defines as “purely emotive words that do not enter into syntactic relations” (Quirk et al., 1985: 853). Neither of the labels, which both focus merely on the expressive function of *lol*, is accurate enough to describe how *lol* is used by speakers on the Internet. Instead of using these labels, Garley et al. (2009), Markman (2013), and Uygur-Distexhe (2014), showed that *lol* functions as a “discourse marker” in computer-mediated interaction. In her article focusing on *lol*, *ptdr* and *mdr*, Uygur-Distexhe offers the following definition of the term “discourse marker”:

[E]xpressions that combine (i) “the semantics of discourse relational predications” (such as the attitudes of the speaker) with (ii) “syntactic dependency on a clausal host” and expressions with (iii) “low information salience”.  
(Uygur-Distexhe, 2014: 243)

7 What can be gathered from this definition is that, as a discourse marker, *lol* is an expression that has low informational content, gives information on the interpretation of the utterance (for example by signalling the attitude of the speaker), and depends on another unit of discourse, while not being integrated in the syntactic clause (which means it is extra-sentential).

- 8 Because its meaning is more procedural than conceptual, it could also aptly be described as a “pragmatic marker”. Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberghe make the following distinction between the two labels:

Discourse marker is the term which we use when we want to describe how a particular marker signals coherence relations. Pragmatic markers as we see them are not only associated with discourse and textual functions but are also signals in the communication situation guiding the addressee’s interpretation.  
(Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberghe, 2006: 2)

- 9 However, since the present study also examines *lol*’s function in discourse organization, “discourse marker” has been preferred to “pragmatic marker”. As a discourse marker, *lol* both marks discourse structure and relations, and gives instructions to the hearer concerning its interpretation.

### 3.2. *Lol* placement in YouTube comments

- 10 As Uygur-Distexhe rightfully notes, “discourse markers are not integrated into the syntactic clause, but this does not mean that they are outside the syntax” (Uygur-Distexhe, 2014: 244). This means that their placement or distribution is not free and that it is therefore always meaningful. Aijmer argues that “pragmatic markers do not occur anywhere in the utterance or the turn but there are rules for their placement which also have to do with their function” (Aijmer, 2013: 16). In the case of *lol*, its being extra-sentential means that its distribution is mostly limited to three possible positions in the utterance: clause-initial, clause-final or stand-alone. Clause-medial *lol* is highly unlikely and is in fact not present in the dataset. In her study of *lol* in text messages, McSweeney writes that “‘lol’ almost always appears at the beginning or at the end of a message, and when it does appear in the middle of a message, it is between clauses” (McSweeney, 2018: 52). The same holds for the present dataset: there are cases of comment-medial *lol*, but in this case *lol* either appears at the end or at the beginning of the clause that it relates to. This seems quite logical for a discourse marker, which is never internal to the argument structure of the verb. In this perspective, the placement of *lol* seems comparable to that of laughter in conversation, which is unlikely to be found in the middle of sentences, as Provine argues:

Laughter occurs at places in the speech stream associated with pauses, phrase boundaries, and the beginning and ends of statements and questions. Thus, a speaker may say, “You are going where? ha-ha”, but rarely “You are going –ha-ha– where?”.  
(Provine et al., 2007: 300)

- 11 Of course, it may sometimes prove difficult to decide with certainty whether *lol* is clause-final or clause-initial when it is used in the middle of a comment. This is mostly the case in comments that contain no or unreliable punctuation, and/or no or unreliable capitalization. It may also be the case in comments whose meaning is unclear or which do not make sense at all. However, this is not very frequent, in part because multi-clausal comments are not numerous on YouTube comment threads, and it amounts to less than 1% of all occurrences in the dataset under study.



Position of <i>lol</i>	Occurrences
clause-initial	185/886 (20.9%)
clause-final	485/886 (54.7%)
stand-alone	209/886 (23.6%)
unclear	7/886 (0.8%)

Table 1 – Position of *lol* in the dataset

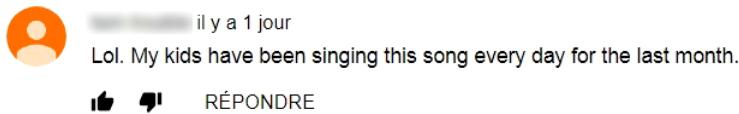
- 12 The first two positions are when *lol* is used alongside a clause in a comment. In this case, it is either clause-initial or clause-final.

### 3.3. Clause-initial position

- 13 Clause-initial *lol* is when *lol* is located at the front, or on the left, of a clause:



- 14 In this case, it is clearly located outside the argument structure of the verb, sometimes by means of punctuation:



- 15 It should be noted that the presence or absence of punctuation may not be significant as punctuation is often used in a non-standard way in CMC (computer-mediated communication). It is therefore not always reliable. This is all the more true for final punctuation, which is very often omitted (for a study of non-standard punctuation in CMC, see Bieswanger, 2013: 476–478).

- 16 It should also be pointed out that clause-initial *lol* is not necessarily located at the beginning of the comment. As mentioned above, some occurrences of *lol* appear in the middle of a comment but are still to be considered clause-initial or final since they appear at the end or at the beginning of the clause that they relate to. Nevertheless, as the vast majority of YouTube comments are not multiclausal, there is little difference between *clause*-initial, *sentence*-initial and *comment*-initial position.

### 3.4. Clause-final position

- 17 Clause-final *lol* is used at the end, which means on the right, of a clause. Most of the time, it is not clearly separated from the argument structure of the verb, even though it is not integrated into it and does not belong to its argument structure:



- 18 But punctuation is again sometimes used to separate it from the clause, with the same questionable reliability and significance which has been noted above:



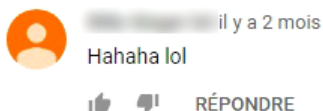
- 19 In this comment, *lol* is syntactically separated from the clause but it seems to make no significant difference in terms of meaning and function compared to the preceding comment, where it is not separated from the clause.

### 3.5. Stand-alone *lol*

- 20 The third and last position in which *lol* is used by commenters is a little different from the first two because this time, it implies that *lol* is used with no accompanying clause:



- 21 However, it can sometimes be used alongside modalities that have the same function, for example *lol* and an emoji “crying tears of joy”, or *lol* and more traditional interjections such as *ha ha*:



- 22 In all such cases, *lol* is used to duplicate the content of another modality; it is not used to accompany or modify clausal content and it has therefore been considered as belonging to the “stand-alone” category.

## 4. Functions of *lol* in each position

### 4.1. A context-dependent marker

- 23 In order to understand the function of *lol*, one has to look to both its immediate and its more general context. This is arguably the case for any discourse marker since a discourse marker is a “sequentially dependent element that brackets units

of talk”, which then functions “in relation to ongoing talk and text” (Schiffrin, 2005: 57). As a discourse marker, the meaning of *lol* is therefore highly relational and cannot be processed in isolation. This is why it is difficult to give a definition of *lol*, and, for instance, why the *OED* defines it through its functions – expressive and pragmatic – and not by a stable semantic content. This is logical enough if we follow Fraser’s description of discourse markers: they signal “a relationship between the interpretation of the segment they introduce, S2, and the prior segment, S1” and “have a core meaning which is procedural, not conceptual”; while “their more specific interpretation is ‘negotiated’ by the context, both linguistic and conceptual” (Fraser, 1999: 931). This is also the case of *lol*: its core meaning is procedural since it indicates an attitude. The attitude in question can be understood only through reference to the context, both narrow (the utterance *lol* may accompany) or more general (the interaction or situation). As a result, the precise value of *lol* in each utterance where it is used is context-dependent.

- 24 In the case of a comment posted on YouTube, the context in question can be a preceding utterance, some part of the utterance where *lol* appears, to its left or right, or the video which is being commented on.

#### 4.2. Functions of stand-alone *lol*

- 25 Stand-alone *lol* is rather frequent since it totals nearly a quarter of all occurrences of *lol* in the dataset. Its most obvious function generally corresponds to the straightforward expressive function of *lol*, which is showing one’s amusement:



- 26 Stand-alone *lol* is particularly frequent among the first comments posted on all three videos. Commenters on YouTube often try to be the first to post a comment, or at least to be one of the “early” commenters. To do that they need to post the quickest reaction that comes to their mind, which, for a humorous video, is often a stand-alone *lol*.

- 27 All the comments above have approximately the same value and content as a complete clause saying “I found that funny”. The primary function of *lol* is then to express the fact that the commenter found the video funny, albeit in a faster

and more synthetic way. However, this is not its only function here. As Schiffrin notes, markers work at different levels of discourse and can act on different planes of talk at the same time (Schiffrin, 2005: 57). This is the case of *lol*: apart from its expressive function, stand-alone *lol* also achieves a second concomitant function, which is a socio-pragmatic function, located at the level of the interaction. The stance-taking theory of Du Bois (2007) may be of some help in understanding what this second function is about. For Du Bois, one of the most important stakes of interaction is for participants to position themselves and position others and objects of interest in and by language. This means that interpersonal issues such as appraisal and alignment are at the heart of interaction. This is all the more true in comments posted on social media, whose main purpose is to position oneself with respect to the object being commented on. Commenting on a video basically means taking a stance with respect to the video. By using *lol* to express their amusement, commenters also approve of the video or align with it or its author. *Lol*, in this perspective, can be considered as a stance-taking device. Its function is not only expressive but socio-pragmatic: it enables the commenter to “display a participation framework”, in Schiffrin’s words (Schiffrin, 2005: 57).

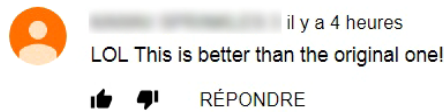
#### 4.3. Functions of clause-initial *lol*

- 28 In the dataset, clause-initial *lol* is almost as frequent as stand-alone *lol*, and it has many similarities with it. First of all, it fulfils functions similar to stand-alone *lol*. Namely, it has an expressive function (expressing amusement), and in doing so it has a socio-pragmatic function (expressing approval and alignment). However, contrary to stand-alone *lol*, it can function in two different ways: it can refer back to the whole video and be followed by a clause which develops this initial reaction, or it can sometimes refer forward to a specific element in the video which is mentioned on the right.

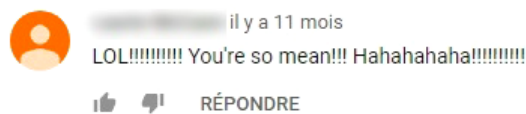
Function of clause-initial <i>lol</i>	Occurrences
expressing amusement and alignment/ backward reference to the video	160/185 (86.5%)
expressing amusement and alignment/ forward reference to a precise element of the video	25/185 (13.5%)

Table 2 – Functions of clause-initial *lol* in the dataset

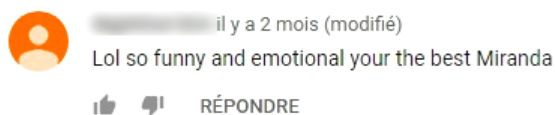
- 29 The most frequent functioning is the first, where clause-initial *lol* refers to the whole video. Indeed, in most cases in the dataset, clause-initial *lol* is also comment-initial and in this case, it constitutes a first reaction to the video which is then developed or completed on the right, in the rest of the comment. This pattern is rather frequent in the dataset since it concerns 18% of all occurrences of *lol*. Here is one such comment:



- 30 Just like stand-alone *lol*, this occurrence of clause-initial *lol* expresses a first, immediate or spontaneous reaction that precedes verbal expression. The clause that follows, “this is better than the original one”, then offers an additional comment that develops the initial reaction or completes it. This two-step operation is even clearer in comments which clearly separate comment-initial *lol* and the following clause by means of punctuation. In this case, comment-initial *lol* clearly functions as stand-alone *lol*:



- 31 The clause that follows *lol* in this pattern of use may develop the initial reaction or not. Sometimes it does:



- 32 In the comment above, “so funny” confirms the user’s reaction to the video. But sometimes the following clause has very little to do with the initial reaction:

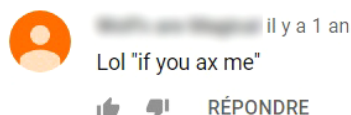


- 33 The second part of this comment does not even concern the video since it is about Miranda’s TV show, “Haters Back Off”. What it does, however, is make the participation framework explicit. “I luv haters back off” displays positive appraisal of Miranda Sings, and so does “you’re the best Miranda” in the preceding comment. Both comments contain direct expressions of alignment that confirm or make explicit what *lol* already implies.

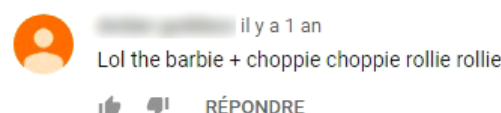
- 34 In such comments, the meaning of *lol* is processed through backward reference. The reaction is expressed with respect to the whole video and the clause that follows *lol* only completes the reaction. Interestingly enough, a second pattern is present in the dataset, which this time implies forward reference. In this case, the element to which *lol* expresses a reaction is not the video as a whole but some specific part of it which is mentioned in the clause on the right, by means of a precise timing:



35 Or through a quotation:



36 Or thanks to any mention of an element appearing in the video:



37 This is particularly interesting since backward reference is generally said to be a more frequent, or a more natural way to process information in discourse, than forward reference. Indeed, as Beeching and Detges write, “a basic property of human language is that discourse unfolds in time”, a property which is “represented in Western linguistics as progression from ‘left’ to ‘right’” (Beeching & Detges, 2014: 1). Since discourse builds from left to right, co-referent elements point backwards, to what has already been said or mentioned, more often than forwards.

38 In the dataset too, forward reference to an element mentioned on the right is far less frequent than backward reference since it concerns only 25 occurrences. The reverse pattern implying backward reference, which is a comment composed of a quotation, a timing or the mention of a precise element of the video followed by *lol*, is much more frequent since it concerns 162 occurrences. This may be due to the fact that the passage mentioned or quoted is the topic of the message. Thus, it is what needs to be mentioned first for the message to be more easily understood. For the same reason, it also seems more logical to provide the object of the reaction before the reaction itself.

#### 4.4. Functions of clause-final *lol*


39 Clause-final *lol* is the most frequent position in the dataset, and by far, since it concerns more than half of all occurrences. It is also the richest in terms of functions since, similarly to clause-initial and stand-alone *lol*, it has an expressive function (expressing amusement) and a concomitant socio-pragmatic function (expressing alignment), but it also has two other functions:

Function of clause-final <i>lol</i>	Occurrences
expressing amusement and alignment	162 (33.4%)
illocutionary marker	252 (52%)
phatic function	64 (13.2%)
unclear	7 (1.4%)


Table 3 – Functions of clause-final *lol*

- 40 Again, clause-final *lol* can be used to react to a precise element of the video and align oneself with the video or Miranda. In this case, as explained above, the element, passage, or quotation which the user reacts to is mentioned first and *lol* is inserted on the right (and can be further developed by a following clause):

 il y a 2 mois  
1:05 lol Flynn cried in the background  
👍 1 🗨️ RÉPONDRE


 il y a 2 mois  
1:55 TO THE END LOLOLOL  
👍 🗨️ RÉPONDRE

 il y a 2 mois  
Shopy shopy rolly rolly lol  
👍 🗨️ RÉPONDRE

 il y a 3 semaines  
"I can be Donald trump" LOL

- 41 This is frequently the case since about 33% of clause-final *lols* have this function (162/485). However, clause-final *lol* also offers two other functions which do not seem to be accessible to sentence-initial *lol* or stand-alone *lol*, one of which is in fact the most frequent function of clause-final *lol*.

- 42 The first one more or less corresponds to O'Donnell-Trujillo and Adams' conception of "laughter as instruction to hear" (O'Donnell-Trujillo & Adams, 1983: 186), or the role of laughter in giving information on how an utterance is to be taken in face-to-face conversation. This function has already been analyzed by CMC scholars with respect to emoticons and emoji. For instance, Walther and D'Addario (2001) explored how emoticons contribute to message interpretation. Dresner and Herring (2010) then developed the idea that emoticons may be used as illocutionary force markers. In a similar way, *lol* can indicate that a remark is not to be taken literally, or that it is meant as a joke. This function is in fact the most frequent function of clause-final *lol*, and the most frequent function of *lol* in the whole dataset: 28% (252/886) of all occurrences of *lol* are used at the end of clauses that would have a different force without it, or that would be interpreted differently. In this case, *lol* can be identified as an illocutionary force marker in a way similar to emoticons and emoji. It is used to clarify "the illocutionary force of [the] message, primarily through modulating either the strength of the illocutionary point or the speaker's commitment to the illocutionary point" (McSweeney, 2018: 56). In the following comment, for instance, it enables a commenter to indicate that her comment is not to be taken at face value:

 il y a 1 an  
This is the scariest video ever.. lol  
👍 🗨️ RÉPONDRE

- 43 *Lol* indicates that the video is not really the scariest video ever and that the remark is to be taken as a joke. In this respect, *lol* also functions to soften or mitigate a potentially aggressive utterance and, as a result, to manage facework (i.e., not hurting the hearer's feelings, defusing potential tension) online:

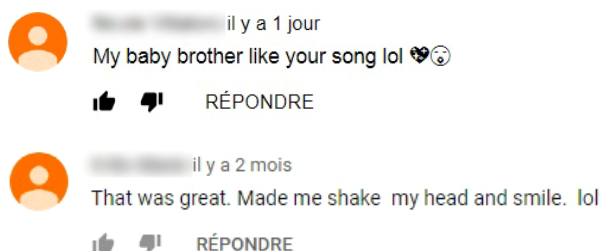


- 44 All these comments contain remarks that could be perceived as accusatory (“what is wrong with you”, “you are a monster”), aggressive (the command “leave the doll alone”), or more generally negative (the complaint “poor toys”). But in all of them, *lol* calibrates the force of the utterance and provides a clue as to how it is to be perceived (namely as a joke/not at face value). If *lol* was removed, the comment could be taken as a piece of criticism or aggression. Adding *lol*, which is then used as a softener, therefore also serves to defuse potential tension or aggressiveness.

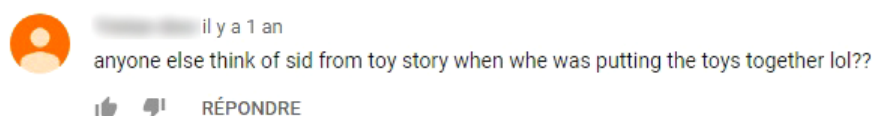
- 45 The second function exclusive to clause-final *lol* is when *lol* is inserted after a statement that seems neither humorous nor ambiguous or aggressive, and whose meaning therefore appears to be literal. In such a context, *lol* does not seem to be needed and could well be deleted without changing the force and meaning of the clause:







46 Using *lol* alongside an utterance whose meaning is literal, or that does not require mitigation, is relatively frequent since it is the case in 64 occurrences of *lol* in the dataset. Why, then, is *lol* used at the end of these clauses? Provine provides one possible explanation in a 1996 article which reports on a study on laughter in face-to-face conversation where he and his team found that most of the time, laughter seems to follow banal remarks. He suggests that laughter, in this case, has a social or phatic function: it is aimed at creating empathy. Similarly, in the comments above, *lol* is not used to express amusement or manage illocutionary force; rather, it functions as a way to bond with the potential reader by showing the commenter's benevolent state of mind. This is especially obvious in comments that are addressed to other readers, such as the comment at the bottom of the page:



47 This comment is not particularly humorous, or offensive, or meant as a joke, and it has no double meaning either. In this case, *lol* seems to merely aim at creating complicity, in the fashion reported by Provine. This may be rather ironic in a world of single-turn interactions such as YouTube comment threads, where most comments are never responded to.

48 It is to be noted that contrary to other discourse markers such as “well”, whose canonical meaning is “good” but has taken on an altogether different procedural meaning in conversation (see Beeching & Wang, 2014, for a study of this semantic shift), *lol*'s canonical meaning, expressing laughter in CMC, already served those pragmatic functions in face-to-face interaction. It is therefore difficult to talk of the “pragmaticalisation” of *lol* when *lol* is used as an illocutionary force marker or with a phatic function.

## 5. Conclusion

49 The conclusion to this study is threefold.

50 A first conclusion is that *lol* enables internet users to still laugh online. It may not always literally be a loud laugh, it may just be a chuckle, a chortle or a snort, but it is still a laugh, which has most of the functions of laughter in face-to-face interaction.

- 51 A second conclusion is that *lol* has functions that are comparable to emoji and emoticons and other more traditional interjections such as *ha ha*. Further research would be needed to try and see whether there is any specialized use and factors of choice emerging between these markers.
- 52 The last conclusion is the answer to this paper's opening research question, which is the possible correlation between the position and function of *lol*. The initial hypothesis proved to be partly wrong. Indeed, *lol* can be used to express a reaction and hence, as an indicator of stance, can be used in any position: alone, in front of, or at the end of a clause. Nevertheless, position is not unrelated to function since some functions seem to be reserved to final position. In this position, *lol* often functions as a kind of punctuation, in the same way as emoticons and emoji that appear at the end of an utterance, whose use is comparable to question marks or exclamation marks according to Dresner and Herring (2010: 263). In this regard, *lol* verifies part of the initial postulate of Beeching and Detges (2014) that left-peripheral elements tend to have a discourse-structuring function and that right-peripheral elements tend to have an intersubjective or modalising role. While left-peripheral *lols* do not always function as discourse-structuring elements, right-peripheral *lols* share the same modal function and, like the right-peripheral elements studied by Beeching and Detges, they "seem to reflect or invite attitudes towards the message or the situation rather than contributing to the message itself" (Beeching & Detges, 2014: 4).

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